

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

TEL: 880-2-88-555-00

FAX: 880-2-9881677, 9885688

E-MAIL: DhakaPA@state.gov

WEBSITE: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>



**REMARKS
BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA
FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE RANA PLAZA BUILDING
COLLAPSE
ILO MEDIA CONFERENCE
RUPOSHI BANGLA HOTEL, DHAKA
APRIL 24, 2014**

The Honorable Minister of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Engr. Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, MP

Mr. Gilbert Fossoun Hounbo, Deputy Director-General for Field Operations and Partnerships, ILO

My diplomatic colleagues and the many others who are addressing this commemorative event

... and all gathered in this place to remember the tragedy of the Rana Plaza building collapse.

Asalaamu 'laikum and good afternoon

One year ago today, tragedy befell Bangladesh ... the collapse of Rana Plaza brought down thousands of tons of concrete upon innocent RMG workers ... when the rescue ended, 1,135 were dead ... so many beacons of light prematurely snuffed out ... it was one of the worst industrial disasters of all time ... indeed, history, sad history was made on that day.

Today we gather to honor those who lost their lives one year ago ... we honor those who were injured and maimed ... we honor the families that have forever been torn apart by those tragic events.

It is fitting that we pay such honor to these innocent victims ... but our words today shall not long endure ... they pale when compared to the tragic losses of a year ago.

I know but one monument befitting the tragedy of Rana Plaza ...

On this day ... the one year anniversary of Rana Plaza, we ... each of us ... we must recommit ourselves to ensuring that never again will Bangladesh experience the anguish of another Rana Plaza building collapse ... no ... never again.

I believe Bangladesh is making impressive progress toward that end, toward ensuring that the workers of Bangladesh will never again find their lives forfeited at the altar of callous greed as workers' lives are put at risk for undue profit.

History is again being made in Bangladesh.

Powerful forces are at play to transform Bangladesh's readymade garment sector by bringing all RMG factories/all RMG factories to international standards in terms of fire safety, factory structural soundness, and respect for workers' rights to freely associate and organize.

America through the GSP Action Plan to restore these trade privileges to Bangladesh...

America and the EU, who together constitute 85% of Bangladesh's RMG market and who associate with Bangladesh in the Sustainability Compact ...

The major buyers through the Alliance and Accord are supporting safety inspections of their source factories ...

The ILO, with support from Canada, Netherlands and UK, is overseeing inspections of all the thousands of factories outside the Alliance and Accord network ...

Workers who in the past 15 months have created over 140 real unions in contrast to only two total for the previous two years ...

Many owners who understand the need to bring the industry to global standards ...

Development partners like America and so many others who are funding initiatives to support sector transformation ...

... and, most especially, the Government of Bangladesh, is now providing stronger, more effective leadership ...

All of these forces are coming together to create a new way to do business in the readymade garment sector ... to create a regimen that closes the door forever to another Rana Plaza disaster. Although the path ahead to success is long and obstructed, I am hopeful that Bangladesh's endeavors to transform its RMG industry will succeed.

I envision a day when all factories are inspected for worker safety and respect for labor rights to ensure they meet accepted minimum standards.

I envision a day when inspection results are posted on a publicly accessible database that shows what remedial action is needed to conform to agreed standards and the status of that remediation action.

I envision a day when all Bangladeshi RMG workers, regardless of where they work in Bangladesh, are accorded full rights in accordance with Bangladesh's commitments to international norms.

I envision a day when profitable, competitive Bangladeshi RMG factories...factories that fully respect their workers' rights...set the new standard for the industry worldwide.

I envision a day when Brand Bangladesh is a Preferred Brand, a Premium Brand ... when Brand Bangladesh is on a path to become the greatest RMG export brand in the world.

Today we commemorate the sad history of one year ago as we honor the victims of that tragedy.

Today we celebrate the new history that Bangladesh seeks to create by building a new global norm for the RMG sector, where owners make fair profits and workers labor in safe conditions and have the right to associate and organize so they, too, have a collective voice.

I am pleased and I am proud that America is Bangladesh's partner as Bangladesh writes this new chapter in the global history of the RMG sector.

Thank you.

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